

NEWS

The Farm Safety Net — Making It Stronger Than Ever

From President Clinton's State of the Union address on January 19:

"We must work hard to help bring prosperity back to the family farm. As this Congress knows very well, dropping prices and the loss of foreign markets have devastated too many family farms. Last year, the Congress provided substantial assistance to help stave off a disaster in American agriculture. And I am ready to work with lawmakers of both parties to create a farm safety net that will include crop insurance reform and farm income assistance. I ask you to join with me and do this. This should not be a political issue. Everyone knows what an economic problem is going on out there in rural America today, and we need an appropriate means to address it."



In 1998, natural disasters, collapsing Asian economies, and a precipitous drop in world grain prices — events far beyond our farming community's control — threatened the livelihood of many of America's farmers. Building on the President's State of the Union address, Secretary Glickman emphasized his deep concern for the economic plight of our farmers. He has called for farm disaster assistance, income protection, and expanded trade to help stabilize the agricultural economy.

During a recent national radio interview, the Secretary noted that farmers do some of the hardest, riskiest, most important work there is to do. "Unlike other nations," he said, "we have never had to go to war because of a lack of food. The economic strength of this country is largely based on our self-sufficiency of producing food at home." But, while other industries offer unemployment benefits and other income protection, farmers don't have this security. The Secretary said this is why it is appropriate to single out farmers for protection.

In his address, President Clinton also stressed the importance of keeping farmers on the farm through trade. He asked the nations of the world to tear down barriers, open markets and expand trade. Secretary Glickman agreed, stressing that our country's future economic growth depends on seeking out opportunities beyond our borders. "The key to restoring farm incomes is not maintaining trade barriers, but creating productive, competitive farm sectors with access to foreign markets," he said. "We must recognize that free and fair trade by definition must work both ways; and, we must continue to act on our fundamental, shared belief that we have far more to gain together than apart."

While trade talks with other nations continue, Secretary Glickman is looking toward FSA to be a crucial part of the enhanced farm safety net — he knows that our reputation for working hard is well deserved.

FSA Initiatives Help Our Nation's Stricken Farmers

FSA is expanding its safety net by offering financial protection, including crop insurance reform and farm income assistance. The Administration and Congress provided FSA with emergency aid funding of \$2.4 billion — \$400 million for expansion of crop insurance and \$2 billion toward disaster losses. Signup for this funding began February 1. Another \$3.5 billion, announced earlier this fall, supplemented the incomes of farmers who were hit by low commodity prices.

The Administration announced another program to help small farmers in the immediate future. The Small Hog Operation Payment provides guaranteed operating loans to farmers devastated by pork prices, which hit their lowest level in five decades. Some producers are even on the verge of losing their farms. Secretary Glickman said he was most disturbed about the velocity in the reduction in prices.

See FARM, continued on page 3

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

FSA National Advisory Council Established

I am pleased to inform you that I have established a council, consisting of 18 members from across the country, to discuss long-term plans for our Agency. The FSA National Advisory Council, which I am chairing, will work on a variety of interrelated issues, including FSA's plan of operation for the upcoming years, customer service, and budget and personnel issues. The council convened for the first time in December in Washington, DC and will meet periodically.

To ensure that the council is representative of everyone in FSA, I have included headquarters and field employees, labor and employee association representatives, and management. I am confident that the people I have selected will faithfully represent all groups in FSA and foster recommendations we can all work with.

Council members include:

- Dee Cole, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs

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Editor: Jillene Johnson
Editorial Board: Janet Baker,
Star Bryant, Dann Stuart,
Steve Thompson.

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Readers are encouraged to contribute stories, photos, and suggestions. Send materials to the Editorial Board at:

FSA Public Affairs Staff
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Stop 0506
Washington, DC 20250-0506

- Randy Cook, National Association of FSA County Office Employees
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- Mark Huntington, Local 3354, American Federation of Government Employees
- Creg Ivison, Local 2831, American Federation of Government Employees
- Jim Kearney, Associate Administrator for Operations and Management
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- Jim Meidinger, National Association of District Directors
- Chris Niedermayer, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs
- Terry Peach, Oklahoma State Executive Director
- Betsy Senter, National Association of Credit Specialists
- Robert Springer, Executive Director for State Operations (EDSO)
- Mara Whitaker, Chapter 264, National Treasury Employees Union

Ex-Officio Members:

- JoDee Bryant, South Dakota, Assistant to the Administrator and EDSO
- Frank Riley, Director, Human Resources Division
- John Williams, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Management

Much of the council discussions will center on customer service. As you know, our working environment has not kept pace with changes in Agency functions, technical improvements, and resource losses. I am proud to say that you all have sustained the highest level of service delivery despite dealing with often outdated facilities, office equipment, management structure, administrative functions, and program processes. But the impact of outdated tools will only worsen over time, inhibiting program participation, damaging FSA's image, and frustrating employees. The council will take immediate action to revamp our working environment and sagging customer delivery system. They will find new ways to learn what our customers need from us and how to update the county committee system and election process.

The council will also tackle Agency budget concerns. Since fulfilling our Agency mission depends on obtaining sufficient administrative and program funding, we need to make sure that everyone understands our crucial role in the future of agriculture. The council will work on this and on the best ways to improve FSA operations based on the President's budget funding. When the budget is released this month, I will let you know the implications to the Agency.

The council will also discuss human resources issues, including grade equity, development of a single, equitable employment system, and fairness throughout the Agency when cutbacks occur. I want to foster communication, trust, and respect among employees at all levels — field, headquarters, management, labor, and employees in different program areas.

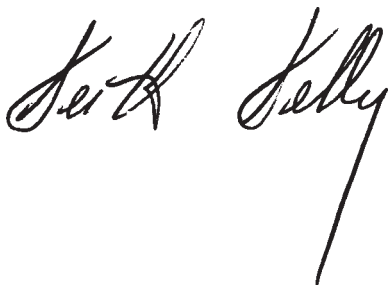
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The council will work to ensure that consistent and honest Agency information is passed on to everyone promptly and that avenues are available to voice opinions when disagreements occur.

The advisory council plans to further address all of these issues. As the council's work progresses, we will begin to implement their recommendations and discuss other issues they identify. We will also, of course, share the ideas and the results of council meetings with you. I will continue to keep all of you informed of the progress and outcomes of other task forces and working groups that affect us.

I know these are not easy tasks — this ongoing process will take a huge commitment and a lot of hard work from us all. But it must be done if FSA is to prepare for the upcoming years with a clear sense of direction that is mandated in our vision statement. I envision this council as an anchor in helping secure our Agency's place in the future of American agriculture.



FARM

continued from first page

"I've never seen anything like prices dropping 80 percent in a four-month period," he said. FSA is getting the word out to hog producers who traditionally have not taken advantage of our loan programs that \$1 billion is available during the signup period, February 1 through February 12. USDA's pork purchases for school lunch and similar programs and expanded pork exports will also aid these producers.

In addition, Secretary Glickman selected FSA to be the lead USDA agency involved in administrative support for the new National Drought Policy Commission (NDPC). This commission will help develop a national drought policy to prepare and respond to serious droughts, including drought prevention and mitigation. FSA developed and will host the NDPC's website to keep the public informed of the commission's progress.

As the Administration and Congress strengthen the farm safety net, Administrator Kelly will do his best to keep

the field offices and our farmers informed about FSA's own initiatives. The strong line of responsibility runs directly from the President to the smallest county office — the folks on the front line who face the farmers across the counter. It is because of our state and county office employees' hard work, spirit, and stick-to-it attitude that we have faced up to adversities in the past. We will meet these upcoming challenges with the same spirit and commitment.



The Small Hog Operation Payment is one of several new projects FSA is working on to relieve the economic crisis our farmers are facing.



CHICKEN FACTS:

Each year nearly 300 million chickens are raised for egg production in the U.S. The chickens produce about 65 billion eggs annually. And, U.S. commercial producers raise more than 3 billion fryers and broilers each year, satisfying the average American's taste for 20 chickens per person.

— Source: University of Texas

Kelly Names Acting Deputy Administrator and Assistant Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs

Administrator Kelly has filled two top-level administrative posts. He named Lawrence W. Mitchell as Acting Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs and Patricia W. Garamendi as Assistant Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs.

"I'm proud to benefit from Larry and Patricia's many talents," said Kelly. "They've both shown themselves highly competent, resourceful, and, most important, dedicated to excellence and the goals of this Agency."

Mitchell and Garamendi will share responsibility for administering the highly intricate and vital area of farm programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program, production flexibility contracts, commodity and livestock disaster programs, marketing assistance loan programs, and the tobacco and peanut programs. They will be responsible for converting farm program legislation into working policies and procedures regulating the delivery of FSA's conservation and commodity programs.

Before accepting this post, Mitchell served as Director of FSA's Legislative Liaison, Executive Secretariat, and Public Affairs Staff, overseeing the Agency's relations with the Congress and the public. Before that, he was Vice President of Government Relations for the National Farmers Union in

Washington DC. He has also worked as a consultant, writer, and held other positions relating to agricultural issues. Mitchell said, "This is a critical time for agriculture and America's farmers, and I look forward to working with so many committed and talented professionals."

Patricia Garamendi recently completed a five-year tour of service with the Peace Corps, where she received the Al Gore Hammer Award for excellence. During her last four years with the Peace Corps, she served as Associate Director responsible for nationwide operations of recruitment, selection and placement of 7,000 volunteers in 91 countries. Before being named as Associate Director of the Peace Corps, she worked for 23 years as manager and controller of her family's cattle ranching and farm operation in California.

Garamendi holds a Juris Doctor degree from Humphreys Law School and a BA degree from the University of California at Berkeley, which will aid her in dealing with the complex legal and administrative work of her new assignment. "I'm honored to be working for FSA and am impressed with the quality of people who work here. I'm confident my farming background and administrative skills will lend great support to our field personnel," she said.



National FFA Week is February 20-27

For more than 70 years, the Future Farmers of America (FFA) has helped students develop leadership skills, self-confidence, and practical hands-on experience in more than 300 careers in the business, science, and industry of agriculture. National FFA Week is designed to strengthen local programs, increase membership, forge stronger partnerships, and enhance local support.

FSA is working to help connect FFA members to their communities. FSA brings classroom knowledge to life for many FFA members through our rural youth loan program. This program helps FFA members establish and operate income-producing projects under the guidance of FFA project advisers and FSA program specialists. Common projects include raising livestock, growing crops, and lawn and garden services. The youths learn how to plan, manage, and operate their projects, skills that will help them lead and succeed in the future.

FSA salutes the nearly 500,000 National FFA members for their commitment to agriculture and looks forward to our continued work with them.



Larry Mitchell



Patricia Garamendi

Good Things in Small Packages

by Ray Smart, District Director, Virginia

Mountain Harvest Farms, Inc., in Albemarle County, Va., recently found themselves with a bunch of apples too small to sell in the fresh market. District III FSA employees in Virginia and 20 volunteers from a local church were happy to accept the apples. They used them to can 1,700 pounds of applesauce for donation to charity. A local cannery donated the use of their facilities and expertise, while grocers and businesses donated over 200 pounds of sugar. Area churches, civic clubs, and others contributed money for the cans.

Volunteers donated most of the applesauce to FACES, a local food bank. District III Director Ray Smart said, "The food bank manager was extremely delighted with such a gift since fruits are seldom on their list of contributed items." The volunteers donated the rest to other food banks and to church-sponsored families.

Smart was pleased with his day of apple gleaning. "It was a tiring, busy day, but we all felt great about our contribution," he said.

Photos by Ray Smart

Jimmy Gantt, CED, Prince Edward/Nottoway Counties; and Tom Eddins, CED, Albemarle/Greene/Nelson Counties; load the apples.



Tom Eddins; Jim Allen, CED, Hanover/Caroline Counties; Tom Conrad, CED, Appomattox County; and Jimmy Gantt make applesauce.

Gleaning Heroes Throughout Washington

by Scott Hallett, Washington State Gleaning Coordinator

FSA employees all over Washington have involved themselves in countless food recovery efforts across the state. Credit goes to employees in Lincoln, Yakima, Chelan, Skagit, and Kittitas Counties for working together to glean food, coordinate donations from farmers markets, and get others involved in gleaning projects.

In just one day, for instance, FSA employees organized a group of 80 volunteers who gleaned 26,250 pounds of apples from a Yakima area farm. A local newspaper heralded this as the largest gleaning effort ever in Yakima County. It also prompted another day of gleaning when area residents came forward asking to volunteer. And in Chelan County, FSA employees assisted with delivering 71,346 pounds of hail-damaged apples to the Spokane Food Bank. The apples were then distributed to food banks and agencies all over eastern Washington.

In all, FSA employees in Washington recovered over 600,000 pounds of food last year. For a list of the state's food recovery efforts and the many volunteers who made it happen, check out Washington's web site at www.fsa.usda.gov/edso/wa/fsthsvt.htm



photos by Scott Hallett
Washington volunteers collect and load boxes and boxes of apples.

Is Jack Frost Nipping at Your Nose?

Well, you're not alone. Americans endure about one billion colds each year. Children get the most colds with about seven per year, while adults average three per year. Unfortunately, since colds are caused by up to 200 different viruses, some researchers think there will never be a cure. But you can help prevent colds and make them bearable when they do occur.

Avoiding Colds:

The best way to beat colds is, of course, to avoid them to begin with.

- Eat well, get plenty of sleep and exercise, and stop smoking.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. You can pick up cold germs easily, even when shaking someone's hand or touching door-knobs and handrails.
- Don't touch your nose, eyes, or mouth without washing your hands first. Germs can enter your body easily through these passage ways.
- Avoid close, prolonged exposure to people with colds.
- Clean surfaces you touch with a germ-killing disinfectant.

Treating Colds:

Although a cold can't be shortened or cured, you can be more comfortable while you suffer.

- Get plenty of rest and keep warm to give your body a chance to fight off the infection.
- Drink lots of fluids. Avoid soft drinks, alcohol, and caffeine.

- During times of low humidity, use a humidifier to keep cold-causing viruses from thriving.
- Use disposable tissues, not handkerchiefs, to reduce the spread of the virus.
- Take only those over-the-counter medications you really need for your particular symptoms. Nasal decongestants unclog a stuffy nose. Cough suppressants quiet a cough. Expectorants loosen mucus so you can cough it up. Pain relievers ease fever, headaches, and minor aches and pains.
- Do not give aspirin to children or teens with symptoms of a cold, as Reye syndrome may occur.

- Antibiotics do not work against cold germs. Antibiotics should only be taken when really needed.

When to call a doctor:

There are serious illnesses that start out with cold-like symptoms. See your doctor if your symptoms get worse or last longer than two weeks.

Source: Department of Health and Human Services



Folklore and Superstitions About Colds

(No, we don't recommend these)

- Rub a roasted onion on the soles of your feet and a cold or cough will disappear.
- Always go barefoot on the first day of May and you will not have a cold that year.
- To treat a bad cold, mix ten or twelve drops of turpentine with a tablespoonful of lard and rub on the chest.
- A sore throat can be cured by wrapping a dirty stocking around it.
- The person who removes his flannels on the first of May will not catch a cold.
- To stop a child's cough, pull three hairs from the crown of his/her head.

Kansas and Toys-For-Tots

by Patricia Smith, Outreach Coordinator,
Kansas State Office

Thirty-two FSA'ers in the Kansas State FSA Office were busy playing Santa last Christmas as they donated 48 toys to the Toys-For-Tots program. The FSA Employees' Committee selected this holiday project to help those less fortunate in the community. The toys were delivered to the Flint Hills Breadbasket for distribution to local children. They all agreed this was a great way to share the holiday spirit!



FSA Employees' Committee members.
Left to right: Kerrie Powell, Doug Haverkamp, Karen Eifert, and Dean Altenhofen.

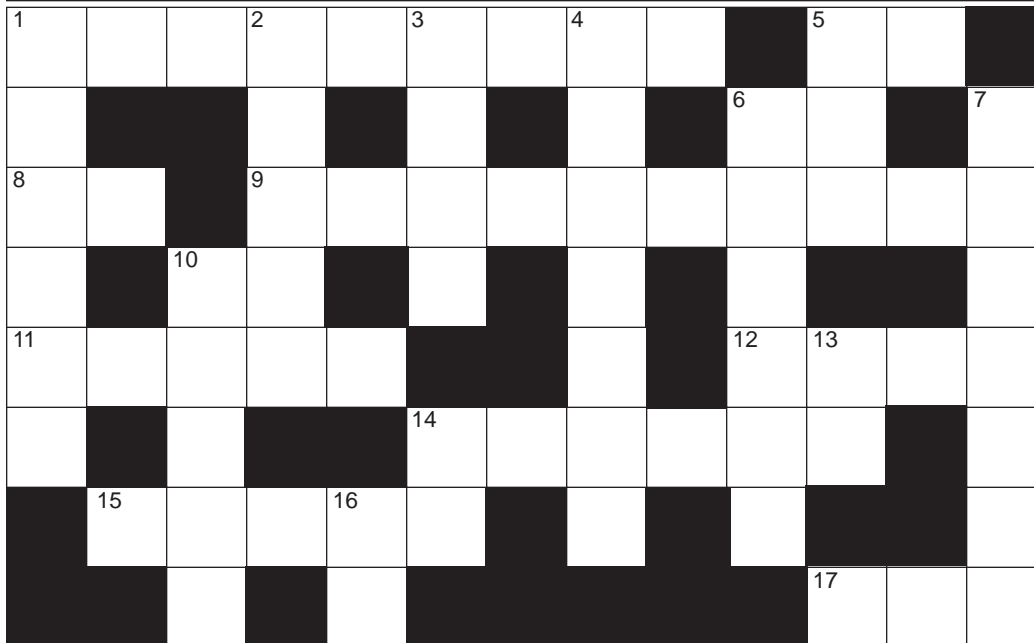
Photo by Patricia Smith

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
Month of February		Black History Month
February 5	Nashville, Tenn.	Larry Mitchell, Acting Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, to attend American Corn Growers Annual Convention
February 5-6	Scottsdale, Ariz.	Vicki Hicks, Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to attend American Dairy Products Institute Board Meeting
February 5-6	Sioux Falls, S.D.	Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs, to attend National Association of Credit Specialists (NACS) Zone B Meeting
February 6	Lubbock, Texas	Larry Mitchell to attend Texas Farmers Union Annual Convention
February 6-7	Memphis, Tenn.	Vicki Hicks to attend National Cotton Council Annual Convention
February 8-12	Charlotte, N.C.	Parks Shackelford, Associate Administrator, to attend question and answer session at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association Meeting
February 12-13	Panama City, Fla.	Carolyn Cooksie to attend NACS Zone D Meeting
February 15		Presidents' Day
February 17-19	Kansas City, Mo.	Jim Kearney, Associate Administrator, to visit the Kansas City Management Office
February 20-27		National FFA Week
February 23	Dimmitt, Texas	Larry Mitchell to attend Texas Corn Growers Association Annual Convention
February 25-26	Charleston, W.Va	Jim Kearney, Carolyn Cooksie, and George Aldaya, Deputy Administrator for Management, to attend NACS Zone C Meeting
March 5-6	Bozeman, Mont.	Carolyn Cooksie to attend NACS Zone A Meeting

Note: The above is subject to change.

FEBRUARY FSA CROSSWORD – HAPPY PRESIDENTS’ DAY!



ACROSS

1. See 15 Across
5. George Bu ____ was our 41st President
6. Our 33rd President, Harry Truman, was born in this state
8. Bill Clinton was born in this state in 1946
9. Ezra Taft Benson was USDA Secretary from 1953 to 1961, the same years that _____ was President
10. Warren G. ____ rding was our 29th President
11. This second President predicted that July 4th would forever be celebrated with “pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations”

12. A defining moment for young George Washington involved a cherry _____
14. This President kept a flock of sheep on the White House lawn during World War I. The wool was sold to raise money for the Red Cross
15. With 1 Across, James Wilson was USDA Secretary under three Presidents, including this nature lover and champion of conservation
17. In 1919, Congress passed a _____ on the manufacture and sale of alcohol, overriding Woodrow Wilson’s veto

DOWN

1. Block and Lyng were USDA Secretaries under his Administration
2. During Andrew Jackson’s Administration, locomotives powered by _____ ushered in the railroad era
3. President Monroe called the U.S. “a territory so _____ and advantageously situated, containing objects so grand, so useful, so happily connected in all their parts!”
4. This President founded USDA
5. At age 33, Thomas Jefferson helped _____ the seeds for freedom when he drafted the Declaration of Independence
6. USDA Secretary during Grover Cleveland’s 2nd term, or a popular brand of salt
7. USDA Secretary from 1961 to 1969, through the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies
10. Grasshopper plagues in the western U.S. prompted this President to establish a commission in 1877 to work controlling the pests
13. William Henry Har ____ iso ____ was the first President to die in office
14. In 1890, President Benjamin Harrison signed _____ into statehood
16. John F. Kenne ____ was our 35th President

Answers to January’s Puzzle

S		H	Y	D	R	O	P	O	N	I	C	S
D	C		O		I		O		D			U
		L	I	L	Y	P	A	D	S		H	O
		I		K		A			O		E	A
A	N	T				R		B	U	F	F	E
C	T		B	R	I	E		P		T		
R		G	A		A		N			Y	A	K
E			T	A	N	G	E	L	O			S



FOOD FACT:

It takes about 1,400 gallons of water to process a meal of a quarter pound hamburger, french fries, and a soft drink.

— Source: Get Wise